Beyond "Good Job": How to Use Praise Effectively in After School Settings

Imagination Travel

Where is our destination?
What do we hope to achieve by praising children?

Two basic types of praise:

1. Praise for “being”
2. Praise for “effort and accomplishment”
Is there ever a time when praise is bad for a child?

“The Psychology of Self-Esteem” by Nathaniel Branden, published in 1969 promoted the following ideas:
1. Self esteem was the single most important facet of a human being;
2. One must do whatever one can to achieve positive self esteem.

Adults should use praise as a celebration of:
1. What concrete or specific thing the person did for you;
2. How you feel about that specific action;
3. What need of yours was fulfilled by their action.
After school program staff can use meaningful praise to:

1. Help children identify and name positive behaviors;
2. Support increased demonstration of positive behaviors;
3. Model positive use of praise for children to imitate with their peers.

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65 Ways to Say “Good Job”

1. Circle the statements that are vague.
2. Draw a square around those statements that demonstrate adult approval.
3. Reword the remaining for increased effectiveness.

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Where do we want to take the children we work with?

Using praise effectively is one way to get where we want to go.

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What do we want children to remember when they leave our program?

For more information on this topic look on the web for:

1. Alfie Kohn “Five Reasons to Stop Saying ‘Good Job’”
2. The National Network for Children Care
3. Familyeducation.com